



## LIETUVOS ŽEMĖS ŪKIO UNIVERSITETO

vadybos ir verslo administravimo krypties  
studijų programų  
išorinio išsamiojo

### VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

Lithuanian University of Agriculture

study field of management and business administration  
external assessment of study programmes

Final Report

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Vilnius  
2005

*Profile of Management and Business Administration Study Programmes*

<b>Title of study programme</b>	Administration of Rural Development	Agricultural Accounting and Finance	Agricultural Business Management	Administration of Rural Development
<b>State code</b>	61203S105	61203S121	61203S122	62103S114
<b>Kind of study</b>	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Master
<b>Mode of study<sup>1</sup> (duration in years)</b>	F (4), PX (5)	F (4), PX (5)	F (4), PX (5)	F (2)
<b>Volume of study programme in credits</b>	172	172	173,5	40
<b>Degree and (or) professional qualification to be awarded</b>	Bachelor of Management and Business Administration	Bachelor of Management and Business Administration	Bachelor of Management and Business Administration	Master of Management and Business Administration
<b>Programme registration date, order No.</b>	1997 05 19 Nr. 565	1997 05 19 Nr. 565	1997 05 19 Nr. 565	1997 05 19 Nr. 565

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1 **F** – Full-time; **PE** – Part-time (Evening); **PX** – Part-time (Extramural).

<b>Title of study programme</b>	Agricultural Accounting and Finance	Agricultural Business Management	Agricultural Accounting and Finance
<b>State code</b>	62103S142	62103S143	62203S142
<b>Kind of study</b>	Master	Master	Specialised professional
<b>Mode of study<sup>2</sup> (duration in years)</b>	F (2), PX (2)	F (2), PX (2)	F (2)
<b>Volume of study programme in credits</b>	40	40	40
<b>Degree and (or) professional qualification to be awarded</b>	Bachelor of Management and Business Administration	Master of Management and Business Administration	Manager
<b>Programme registration date, order No.</b>	1997 05 19 Nr. 565	1997 05 19 Nr. 565	1997 05 19 Nr. 565

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2 **F** – Full-time; **PE** – Part-time (Evening); **PX** – Part-time (Extramural).

## **1. Introduction**

The self-assessment report (SAR) for the Lithuanian University of Agriculture (LUA) was produced during March to October 2003 for 3 Bachelors programmes and 3 Masters programmes. A Special Programme in Agricultural Accounting and Finance has been excluded from this report. The SAR was produced by a self-assessment group comprising the Dean of Faculty of Economics and Management, heads of departments, staff, employers and student representatives. The SAR is informative and self-critical; it provided a sound start to the site visit. It is well produced overall with many relevant charts and tables.

The site visit was on Wednesday 2 March 2005. The visiting experts comprised: professor J Ljung, professor A Ainamo, professor W Karten, professor D Goss and professor V P Pranulis.

The six programmes are managed by the Departments of Accounting and Finance, Business Management, and Administration and Rural Development.

## **2. Aims and goals of the Study Programmes**

The main aim of the study programmes is to train specialists in field of management and business administration for the agricultural sector. The aim for bachelors programmes is to train in more general skills and the aim of the masters programmes is to offer high level professional and scientific qualifications.

The aims and goals relate in general appropriately to the labour market, the interests of employers, and the interests of students. They also reflect the needs of national development. The goals relate directly to the aims of the programmes and LUA seems able to implement the goals within the set time limits for the six programmes of study.

## **3. Analysis of the Programme**

### **3.1. Study programme *Administration of Rural Development (undergraduate studies)***

#### **3.1.1 Structure, contents and study methods**

The structure, content and methods of the programme are consistent with the aim of training management and business administration specialists to acquire theoretical knowledge and special skills to take independent decisions related to the problems of rural development management and the administration of rural development institutions. The experts expressed some doubt as to whether the programme appropriately fits demand of the labour market, but the success of the first graduates was reassuring in this regard and gives positive signals.

It seemed that the selection of study subjects other than management and business administration has limited overall coherence. We agree with the Self Assessment Report (186.2) that expanding the proportion of management and administration subjects should be continued as, at present, this appears somewhat less than would be expected. Practical training outside university to consolidate knowledge is an important part of the second year programme, and the time for it could usefully be expanded.

#### **3.1.2 Execution of studies and support for students**

The system of teaching, learning and evaluation applied to the programme ensures that students systematically acquire professional knowledge, skills and abilities. Knowledge of empirical research is

provided during the studies by writing essays etc. and preparing the project for the final thesis, chosen from an approved list of topics. Students have opportunities to participate in special seminars to improve their knowledge and skills e.g. in presenting their ideas.

Teachers pay significant attention to continuous study support. They give information on the study programme and sources of information for individual work. Students can use the, somewhat poor, library and the internet. The department gives out teaching aids and lecture notes. Career Days are organised to introduce students to the needs of the labour market. Only two of the students had taken the chance to study abroad in one of the EU programmes.

### **3.1.3 Variation in the number of students**

The number of students had been relatively stable during the last years but the number of applicants has increased significantly. The reason for this is unclear, although it now appears to be declining. The dropout rate of students is rather low, the main reason seeming to be the difficult financial situation for many who come from rural areas.

### **3.1.4 Teaching staff (the following comments apply to all programmes)**

Teaching staff are well qualified and clearly committed to these programmes. However, at the meeting with teachers it was generally expressed that their workloads did not allow them sufficient time to undertake effective scientific research. Given the specialised nature of this field and its uniqueness within Lithuania, this is a worrying situation that, if not addressed, could have an adverse impact on the quality of the programmes and their chances of securing grant income and international cooperation, both of which are necessary if their future is to remain secure; this applies particularly at masters level and beyond.

On a more positive note, teachers expressed their support for the pedagogic development opportunities offered by the university, including training by Scandinavian universities. Most also appeared to have made international visits in the not too distant past. It should be noted that students expressed their appreciation of being taught by lecturers with international and research experience. Praiseworthy is the care and ability of teachers to comment on students' work, rather than to only grade. However, it can be argued that the university needs to improve the quantity of the highest qualified staff in some programmes, not least because these programmes have significant strategic implications for the future of Lithuania's rural economy.

### **3.1.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme**

The very detailed advantages and disadvantages pointed out in the Self Assessment Report (SAR) were confirmed and the steps already taken to ensure improvements in key designated areas were recognised. But by usual standards, the study programme still seems to have a degree of business/management content below that usually expected for an award of a Bachelor of Management and Business Administration; attention will therefore need to be given to the range and coherence of business subjects in relation to others.

## **3.2. Study programme *Agricultural Accounting and Finance (undergraduate studies)***

### **3.2.1 Structure, contents and study methods**

The SAR draws attention to the excess of 12 credits (172 rather than 160) associated with specialist agricultural training. We were informed that this has now been addressed and this training incorporated within the standard 160 credits. Staff was aware of the likely changes in the nature of scale of agricultural activity and was prepared to change the design of the programme and its content to respond to this situation.

Study methods included traditional lecture and seminar formats and with the conventional university emphasis on theory rather than practice. However, it was clear from discussions with both staff and students that opportunity to develop practice were available within the programme, albeit not to the extent that students appeared to want. This was confirmed by the meeting with graduates who stated that greater emphasis on putting theory into practice and using more 'realistic' styles of learning would have benefited them on entering the labour market. However, against this must be set the fact that the employers were keen to emphasise that they valued students with a sound theoretical basis.

### **3.2.2. Execution of studies and support for students**

It was clear from the meetings with staff, students, graduates, and employers that the programme is enthusiastically supported, evidenced by the consistently expressed commitment of staff and students.

Although feedback is taken from students, the extent and formality of this process remained somewhat unclear. It did not seem that every unit was systematically evaluated. However, students expressed themselves generally happy about the level of consultation. In particular, they stated that staff were accessible and happy to consult with them.

One issue of possible concern was the view expressed by the students that, in the final year, there could be a 'bunching' of assessments, especially when they were researching their dissertations, which made this period seem particularly over-loaded.

### **3.2.3. Variation in the number of students**

Clearly this is a very popular course with demand considerably exceeding supply. There is a very strong imbalance in favour of female students. The tendency for some students to change from f/t to p/t study due to marital status or financial changes was confirmed, as was the view that this seems to be a reflection of the balance between female – male of the course and the general financial position of students rather than an indication of dissatisfaction with the study programme.

### **3.2.4. Teaching staff**

See section 3.1.4 above

### **3.2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme**

The advantages listed in the SAR were broadly confirmed (with the partial exception of sufficiency of material resources – see above and further below).

Similarly, the weaknesses can also be confirmed. Although it is recognised that steps have been taken to try to address these issues, it is somewhat disappointing that in the two years since the SAR was being prepared, many of the key issues remain a source of concern.

## **3.3. Study programme *Agricultural Business Management (undergraduate studies)***

### **3.3.1 Structure, contents and study methods**

Study methods in the Agricultural Business Management (undergraduate studies) study programme are oriented towards gaining general understanding of agriculture. The main aim is to train specialists of a bachelor's degree in a level of professional and scientific qualification that can be distinguished from non-university degrees, on the one hand, and a master's level, on the other hand. Goals include gathering economic information, implement its usage and make business decisions.

In 1992 the LUA. cooperated with American lecturers who visited LUA to teach the students fundamentals of business management. Now Lithuanian professors have produced teaching material in Lithuanian, which is favoured over teaching material in English. Students seem to learn the fundamentals of business and management in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their studies of business management. Students have found the study of these fundamentals very attractive. Steps could be taken to bring these studies of fundamentals forward; that is, to an earlier year of a student's studies.

Recent changes in the study programme include steps to lessen duplication of knowledge with other programmes and to increase specialization. The aim is to increase transferability of skills, on one hand, and to enhance the practical applicability of knowledge, on the other. Within this context, relationships with employers are being developed for exchange of information and knowledge for mutual gain. Teaching staff testified that 'we somehow manage' but, nonetheless, getting training places for students has been somewhat of a problem, as testified to the team of experts by staff and students.

### **3.3.2 Execution of studies and support for students**

With recent pedagogical training, structures are in place for modern study methods.

There have been few visiting lecturers from representatives of companies or from other organizations outside the university because 'managers are not so brave'. To cope with this challenge, students have had visits to cooperatives and public organizations as well as, in a few cases, to private companies.

The challenge of getting training places has also been recognized by employers that were interviewed by the expert team. These employers exhibited a high commitment to working with the LUA. to enhance the amount of training places.

There seemed to be a predominance of 'cathedral' or lecturing-of-fundamentals model of teaching rather than a practice- or case-by-case based model of teaching, although there was evidence of greater experimentation with different techniques being developed. Besides pedagogical training, special emphasis has been put on on-line means of distribution of knowledge.

Students appreciate when teachers have up-to-date international knowledge from conferences, etc. Teaching can involve discussion and questions by students and facilitation by teachers. Students also do presentations, based on their teamwork. Students were interested in increasing the amount of what they call 'role play', 'business games', or teamwork with 'real' business cases.

### **3.3.3. Variation in the number of students**

The first students were accepted in 1999; from the beginning the programme was very popular and has had one of the highest competition rates for entry, increasing from 4.45 to 60.5 per place between 1999 and 2003. No increase for the programme has been planned; instead the university tries to channel excess demand from students into technology and biomedicine.

### **3.3.4. Teaching staff**

see 2.4.1 above.

### **3.3.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme**

The bachelor's program in Agricultural Business Management is unique in Lithuania. It has also developed into a platform for consulting management in other fields, such as business communications

One disadvantage is the insufficient amount of time, as of yet, allocated for staff's scientific research. Similarly, it would appear that some teachers do not update their literatures on a continuous and cumulative basis.

## **3.4. Study programme *Administration of Rural Development (master's studies)***

### **3.4.1 Structure, contents and study methods**

The main objectives of the study programme are to prepare students for self-directed activity in the field of management and scientific research relating to rural development. Structural changes in Lithuania's rural development and in the labour market suggests a need for qualified administrators with a wide spectrum of scientific knowledge able to work in national and international institutions and projects of rural and agricultural development. Therefore the main objective is to form scientific research skills to support academic and consulting activity utilising modern knowledge in two specialisations, namely, *Social Rural Management* and *Consulting Management* (but noting that the former does **not** seem to conform to the normal conventions of a Master of Management and Business on account of the apparent imbalance of subjects towards the 'social' rather than the 'management' components).

### **3.4.2. Execution of studies and support for students**

The programme has a duration of 2 years with 80 credits including scientific research. It is singular in Lithuania. Contact lectures are in progress for three semesters, the fourth is assigned for the final master thesis.

### **3.4.3. Variation in the number of students**

The number of students is rather low – only ten in each specialisation. It has not changed.

### **3.4.4. Teaching staff**

See above 3.1.4

### **3.4.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme**

The programme allows the expansion and improvement of knowledge and skills of first level studies. But it is not yet clear whether it meets its goals; it should be reviewed after the second graduation. There may be some merit in considering whether changing the name of the Rural Development programme to Regional Development would give it a broader appeal to students and to potential external sponsors and collaborators within the EU.

## **3.5. Study programme *Agricultural Accounting and Finance (master's studies)***

### **3.5.1 Structure, contents and study methods**

The main aim of this study program is to train specialists in high level professional and scientific qualification, to be ready for independent scientific, management and pedagogical activity in the area of accounting, finance and auditing, capable to react into exchanges of business environment in process of integration of Lithuanian economy.

### **3.5.2. Execution of studies and support for students**

The master programme has a duration of 2 years (4 semesters) and the credits will be 80 credits (ECTS = 120cr). The fourth semester has been allocated for scientific research, preparation and defence of the final thesis.

The strategy of teaching, learning and evaluating on the study program seeks to allow mastery of theoretical and practical aspects of chosen specializations in line with International Accounting Standards, Directives and Regulations of European Union, and to provide scientific research in the area of accounting and finance. The main aspects of academic support for master's level students are the same as for students of the Bachelors study level, however it is based on closer cooperation due to lower number of the students. There are possibilities to use literature sources not only provided in libraries, but also related to teachers' personal interests.

Lectures, seminars and individual work form the arena of learning. The students frequently work in teams and present their findings in seminars. The final thesis follows new regulations and the examination is an ongoing process, adopted since the self-report have been delivered.

In the SAR it is said that a strong focus have been put on scientific research and that practical aspects are taken into consideration. However it seems that practical training is mostly related to study visits and short period of practice. The scientific approach is best explained in relation to the master thesis writing.

### **3.5.3. Variation in the number of students**

The number of students admitted to this study program in period of 1998-2002 was relatively low. During years 1998 to 2003 the number of students has been between 19 to 30. Some of the students have used the possibilities for SOCRATES exchange programs.

### **3.5.4. Teaching staff**

See above, 3.1.4

### **3.5.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme**

The master program in Agricultural Accounting and Finance is unique for Lithuania.

One disadvantage is the insufficient amount of time is allocated for staff's scientific research. The schedule seems to be tied-up with activities, which seems to be a hindrance for self-studies and flexible learning. The students have schedules class close to 6 hours per day.

## **3.6. Study programme *Agricultural Business Management (master's studies)***

### **3.6.1 Structure, contents and study methods**

The programme appears to be appropriately designed and structured. Although the SAR mentions some inconsistency with regulations, we are assured that steps have been taken to redress the shortfall in scientific components.

The SAR's outline of the programme is rather vague and couched in generalities. In particular, more explicit attention could be given to how the subjects taught build upon and extend bachelor's education. There was, however, no indication that the actual delivery of these subjects was at an inappropriate level.

### **3.6.2. Execution of studies and support for students**

We were able only to speak to a limited number of masters students and they appeared to think that difficulty with self-study (a point raised in the SAD) was not a significant problem. They expressed contentment with their studies. Support for students appears to be consistent with that expected at this level, although the general lack of resources, especially in terms of library and computing facilities, is likely to limit possibilities.

### **3.6.3. Variation in the number of students**

As stated above, recruitment has not been as good as expected and, together with the substantial number of students who take academic leave (primarily for family reasons), there must be some doubt about long term sustainability. It is encouraging that numbers of students appear to be increasingly, but this seems to be at very modest levels.

### **3.6.4. Teaching staff**

See above 3.1.4

### **3.6.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme**

Whilst this programme clearly has a number of advantages relating to the specialist nature of the education it delivers and the need for this in the Lithuanian economy, it also appears to have the major disadvantage that the absolute number of students seeking this level of education appears to be both small and relatively unstable (i.e., prone to take academic leave). This means that at any one time the overall learning experience for students may be reduced because the course may lack 'critical mass'. Whilst there may be some benefits from working in very small groups, interaction with other students is important at master's level. The university is exploring ways of attracting students other than their own graduates and this is to be encouraged. Specific attention should be given to this, and to prospects for international recruitment to try to ensure a viable and consistent student cohort. This reemphasises the need to sustain research capability in order to enhance the university's reputation as a key international player in this field.

## **4. Material conditions**

The Lithuanian University of Agriculture is situated in a building constructed in 1963 in a university-campus area outside the city of Kaunas. There is a critical mass of students and teaching staff on site that serve to create a bustling campus atmosphere.

Material conditions show some signs of needing to be updated. The equipment did not always seem to include a standard role for video equipment, overhead projectors, computer video projectors, or other audio and video materials. However, the Internet network is of high quality.

The classrooms are satisfactory. There are classrooms, some of them full-size lecture rooms, equipped with video and audio equipment. There are other teaching aids such as overhead projectors for the other classrooms. There are Internet rooms, special language teaching facilities, gyms, and other facilities.

There are many books in the library, with some very interesting material, especially in terms of what appear locally classic works and worthy of preservation. However, there is a need for more new material. The expert team was told that students have the ability to also go to other universities in the Kaunas area and within Lithuania, but an overly heavy reliance on such a fall-back option discounts from the university-campus advantage. There are limited signs of systematic accumulation of scientific knowledge in terms of chosen journals or the layout of the books to make the library easily accessible to a business-management researcher. Too much of literature is textbook literature.

## **5. External relations**

LUA has extensive and well-documented contacts; these are strong and comparable to other well-established European universities. Locally it is closely integrated with government bodies concerned with agriculture and with a number of local organizations of producers and support services. Internationally it is linked to numerous credible partners that enable exchanges of staff and students, and involvement in international research projects.

## **6. Feedback**

Great efforts are made to get useful feedback not only during the studies but also from graduates. Anonymous questionnaires are used as well as interviews and individual meetings. This information is evaluated in order to improve teaching methods and also the content of the study programme. However, it could be suggested that feedback could be more systematically sought at the level of individual subjects rather than on the more general basis that is currently used.

There is an intensive communication with graduates which provides good feedback in spite of the low answer rate from the questionnaires given to them at the end of their examinations. Another source of feedback is the close contact to employers particularly at Career Days organised by the faculty.

## **7. Internal assurance of study quality**

SAR gives just very common impression about formal structure and activities toward internal quality assurance in the Lithuanian University of Agriculture. Study quality improvement is bound up with Strategic Draft' 2001 of the Faculty activity. However there is no strong evidence related implementation of the Strategy. According to the SAR "Comprehensive strategy of improvement the activity of Faculty is in starting position." Our impression was that it had not progressed significantly in formal terms.

## **8. General assessment of the programmes within the study field**

The general assessment of the 3 undergraduate programmes and the 3 master programmes is positive. The standard of student work is appropriate overall. As well as the advantages and disadvantages for each programme in the text, the overall recommendations of the experts are given in 8.1 below: The specialised

professional program in agricultural accounting and finance have not been assessed as it by the institution been excluded from the plan in due of low student interest.

## 8.1 Recommendation to the higher education institution

- The faculty seems to have too few possibilities for research and to participate in conferences and academic writing. That is a general remark but as the agriculture university offers masters courses it should pay more attention to research.
- The library at the department of Management and Business Administration was not well equipped. We could see very few journals and periodicals available. However faculty and students have access to the main library, which we were not able to assess.
- The computer quality was exceptionally good. There were not enough for appropriate work, albeit consistent with Lithuanian standards. Classrooms and resources for multimedia were modest. There is room for improvement in the level of provision.
- The university shows a strong profile in finance and accounting, which is known outside of the agricultural sector. Students have got positions not only in this sector. This could be emphasised more strongly, particularly as a means of attracting greater international cooperation.
- The two programmes in Rural development needs more preparation in order to become a strong profile in Regional development.
- There seems to be a need for more theoretical reflection in Business management from the employers' perspective. In contrast the students want to have more practical training. The department of Business Management may evaluate their structure in order to see what ever a more innovative balance can be achieved.
- Meetings with staff and students show a genuine interest and commitment. The pedagogic development seems good and has been improving in the last years and should continue.
- It is important for the department of Management and Business Administration at Lithuanian Agriculture University to give more attention to strategic decisions as this industry may undergo a radical change during the coming 5-10 years. The university (and the department) can be a leader in that transition.
- There is a case for looking at the balance between business and management and other subjects on some of the programmes, most notably for rural development.

## 8.2. Proposal on accreditation

Lithuanian University of Agriculture:

- Undergraduate study programme *Administration of Rural Development* (state code 61203S105) is given **conditional accreditation**
- Undergraduate study programme *Agricultural Accounting and Finance* (state code 61203S121) is given **full accreditation**
- Undergraduate study programme *Agricultural Business Management* (state code 61203S122) is given **full accreditation**
- Master's study programme *Administration of Rural Development* (state code 62103S114) is given **conditional accreditation**
- Master's study programme *Agricultural Accounting and Finance* (state code 62103S142) is given **full accreditation**
- Master's study programme *Agricultural Business Management* (state code 62103S143) is given **full accreditation**
- Specialised professional study programme *Agricultural Accounting and Finance* (state code 62203S142) is given **restricted accreditation**

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..... Prof. Erno Zalai

..... Prof. Kurt Pedersen

..... Dr. Gintaras Gavenas

## **Addendum**

(Lithuania University of Agriculture; Study programmes in Administration of Rural Development, Undergraduate '61203S105' and Master '62103S114').

The Vice-Rector for studies in his 'Explanation due to the draft of assessment conclusion' replies in details on some of the critical remarks made by the expert team, on the basis of which they disagree on the conditional accreditation recommended for the two programmes.

Most of the comments of the undergraduate programme and the master programme in Rural Development relate to issues which were not made sufficiently clear to outsiders in the information they provided or changes they have made 'recently', and at times they simply express differences in opinion about the same facts, on which there is not much use of arguing.

The reviewers had to consider the information provided them before and during their visit, and confront them with their international and Lithuanian experience. They considered all information in considerable detail and they also took cognisance of changes where this was clearly indicated and evidenced. The reviewers appreciate the effort given to increase the quality and strengths of the programmes, which is shown in the letter. As we pointed out in the recommendation, the university has to give more attention to strategic decisions as this industry may undergo a radical change during the coming 5-10 years. The weakest objections is in relation to research – we recognised that some staff were doing research but questioned how effectively this was embedded in the curriculum and whether ALL staff were being given adequate support to conduct research. This will be very important if the department will be the leader in the coming transition of the rural development or regional development.

The team members thus do not feel they should alter their final judgments, especially taking into consideration that the programmes has in the meantime improved the structure of obligatory subject, expanding the time for practical training and take steps to increase participating in research projects. Repeating our conviction that the potential of these programmes is high and very important for the country. In order to succeed in developing better structured and higher quality programmes in the area of rural development, *we sustain our conditional accreditation recommendation.*